



## **IRAQ'S UNREADY SECURITY FORCES: AN INTERIM ASSESSMENT**

By Barak A. Salmoni\*

*This article examines the emergence of the various Iraqi security forces that were created by the U.S.-led coalition since it deposed Saddam Hussein's regime in 2003. Based in part on his own observations and interviews with those responsible for training these forces, the author discusses the challenges and dilemmas faced by coalition forces in their attempts to create local security forces that will be capable of enforcing order and ending the insurgency.*

Coalition leaders consider Iraqis' ability to enforce their own security needs to be essential to resuscitating the Iraqi state, especially given the June 2004 turnover of power to a new government there. The existence of such credible, cohesive Iraqi security forces is also a necessary precondition for coalition troop drawdowns from Iraq.(1) Fielding indigenous Iraqi security formations has thus become the highest priority.

The desertion or collusion with insurgents of large numbers of Iraqi soldiers and police during disturbances in central Iraq during the spring of 2004 reinforced this pressing need. Such developments also exposed important flaws in the recruitment, training, and equipping of Iraqi security personnel, rendering them as yet totally unprepared to contribute measurably to the country's security. As anti-coalition and anti-Iraqi government violence continues, the need to improve Iraq's security forces remains pressing, even as coalition forces' relationships with the indigenous government and security officials change.

Coalition members in Iraq are currently conducting most of the training and equipping of Iraqi forces, though private

security contractors and coalition-friendly governments have handled some training.(2) Since late spring 2004, the various Iraqi security formations have been nominally reorganized as the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF), just as the coalition structures for training them have continued to evolve. Among different coalition areas of responsibility, the unification of recruitment, training, and equipping standards has lagged behind, as has the standardization of the order of battle. The vision of each ISF branch's roles, future, and relationship with other branches has also remained undefined. The now-sovereign Iraqi government's extension of authority into increasing areas of national life is likely to complicate this process of definition, as new Iraqi personnel--with agendas that are as yet unclear--are sure to renegotiate relationships continually with each other and the coalition.

### **THE IRAQI SECURITY FORCES: STRUCTURES**

Since the autumn of 2003, widely differing statements about the numbers of Iraqi recruits, trainees, and personnel actively serving have emerged from a variety of official and unofficial sources.

Such statements--often motivated by political goals--routinely confuse different categories, such as Iraqis arriving at recruitment stations who may never actually enlist; those receiving wages in spite of rarely showing up to train or patrol; Iraqis in training but not service-ready; Iraqis serving without undergoing training of any sort; Iraqis in service with minimal "transitional" training; and finally, fully-trained, regularly serving members of the Iraqi Security Forces.(3)

Further, some reports asserting satisfactory levels of training and manning use older targets, even though these goals continually shifted through the winter and spring of 2004. Likewise, when reporting equipment provision, not all statements distinguish between equipment pledged and actually delivered, and rarely is reference made to quality of equipment, arms, and ammunition. The result of such different reporting sources and motivations has recently been criticized as "a far less honest reporting system that grossly exaggerates the actual level of training," such that "status reports do even more to disguise the level of true progress" to a "simply unacceptable" degree. References to quantitative data thus produce much more of a numbers haze, in spite of some recent heroic efforts to add clarity to the picture.(4)

Numerically, the largest service is the Iraqi Police Service (IPS), under the administrative control of the Iraqi Ministry of the Interior. The ministry is intended to gradually take over operational control of the police from coalition units. With 85-95,000 personnel nationally, it illustrates the largest degree of continuity from before March 2003. In any given locality, a number of commanders and patrolmen have either continued in place or returned to the job, either with or without coalition-provided re-training. Additionally, attached to the Iraqi Police is a multi-company-sized formation to be deployed

on the pattern of American police SWAT teams, while separate from the Police is a Counter Insurgency Force.

The Interior Ministry currently controls two more services. The Iraqi Border Police concentrates in particular on managing transportation corridors in proximity to border outposts. In addition, the Customs Police and civilian Customs Service actually operate in the border posts. Finally, the Facilities Protection Service emerged in the fall of 2003, and is intended to protect strategic infrastructure from insurgent attacks, as well as individual ministry assets. On a monthly basis, the Ministry of Finance delivers funds to individual ministries, which then hire out elements of the Facilities Protection Service. Often recruited on a local tribal basis, the FPS has grown in size from 14,500 members in December 2003 to more than 70,000 in April-June 2004.

The Ministry of Defense controls fewer personnel, though the organizations are more substantive. The Iraqi Armed Forces (IAF), previously dubbed the New Iraqi Army, is intended to be a small force, between 25-35,000 men, organized as three divisions and twenty-seven battalions. Plans call for designating between three brigades and a division (nine battalions; 6,600 troops) as an Iraqi National Task force (now referred to as Iraqi Intervention Force), to combat terrorists and foreign anti-coalition forces within Iraq. Further, a two battalion-sized formation will combine the Iraqi Counterterrorist Force and Commandos (about 1,600 troops) into an Iraqi Special Operations Force.

The current operational concept views the army as specifically directed away from domestic security enforcement and toward protecting Iraqi territorial integrity; though recently formed army units have been deployed domestically with mixed results. Given the outward focus, brigades are tethered by limited fuel, provisions, and

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ammunition to something like a 70-kilometer combat radius around their bases.

Rather than the old Iraqi army's mechanized infantry model, primary tactical formations are motorized rifle battalions operating most frequently as companies. Thus, rather than tracked heavy tactical vehicles mounting missile launchers, automatic cannon, or heavy machine guns, the Iraqi armed forces are to be truck-based with light armor and light machine guns. These are thus sector defense formations. Likewise, Iraqi air and naval assets are limited both quantitatively and qualitatively, with the air force planned to possess only several hundred men and provide only transport assets (C-130 transport planes, UH-1H helicopters) able to accommodate several companies at a time. The Coastal Defense Force is envisioned solely as a brown water (coastal) navy.

Rather than separate operating services, an Iraqi joint headquarters unifies command of a small army and minuscule air force and navy to a much higher degree than in other Middle Eastern armies (with the exception of Israel).(5) Ultimately, given the threats of Syria and Iran as well as the tensions between Turkey and the Kurds, the small size of Iraq's army will require a coalition presence for an extended period, unless political expediency and coalition manpower difficulties force a hasty expansion of the IAF both quantitatively and in terms of weapons systems.

If the current Iraqi Army's shift away from domestic law enforcement as well as its severely emasculated table of organization and equipment continues, the much more significant force contributing to internal Iraqi security will be the Iraqi National Guard (ING). It had been known as the Iraqi Civil Defense Corps (ICDC) until the new Interim Iraqi government under Prime Minister Iyad Allawi renamed it. The ING has been a problematic

service, with an always-uncertain future. Originally emerging in late fall 2003 as an adjunct and support service to coalition units, its purpose evolved over winter 2003-2004 to fill in the gap between the police and the army, the latter remaining notional during the same period.

During the first half of 2004, the ICDC was considered a constabulary force or light infantry with some tactical vehicle mobility able to deploy operationally with American units that would train, advise, and assist them. Consequently, it was hoped, coalition force protection would improve as increasing duties would be undertaken with or by locally recruited forces which had greater linguistic and intelligence capabilities as well as an understanding of the people. Likewise, it was important to coalition leaders to portray the ICDC as a leading and successful element in the indigenization of Iraqi government and security, thus demonstrating the coalition's sincerity in returning sovereignty to Iraq.(6)

The force's growth reflected this change. By December 2003, there were 15,000 members of the ICDC, with one 800+ member battalion designated to serve in each of Iraq's eighteen provinces. By April 2004, the corps had ballooned to about 32,000 members, and now stands at over 41,000, almost twice the army's size.

Originally under the ministry of the interior, the ICDC was turned over to the ministry of defense by Coalition Provisional Authority Order 73 as "a component of the Iraqi Armed Forces."(7) Now called the Iraqi National Guard, its units remain under the operational control of non-Iraqi coalition commanders. The ING's future administrative and operational command is uncertain. Some coalition authorities, but especially the ING's own command, advocate its continued existence as a service separate from the Iraqi army. Others have proposed that over time the ING be trained more like a military service,

in preparation for its eventual absorption into the army itself. Still other proposals foresee the ING being divided in several ways. Each scenario possesses ramifications for the cohesion, strength, and potential political power of the forces concerned. It also means that until a clear decision is made and accepted, it will be difficult for coalition commanders and trainers, as well as for Iraqis, to think strategically.

### **TRAINING CHALLENGES**

By mid-June 2004, only four of the Army's projected twenty-seven battalions had undergone training. The Kirkush base northeast of Baghdad is a primary location for recruit training. Initially, basic training was provided to Iraqis by U.S. contractors from the Vinell Corporation, supervised by coalition military personnel under the overall command of Major General Paul Eaton. Eaton, previously commander of the U.S. Army School of Infantry, was until June 2004 the coalition's senior military assistance officer, in charge of the Office of Security Cooperation.

Initial army training, however, went poorly, with coalition personnel accusing the contractors of misunderstanding the Iraqi environment, instilling poor discipline, and not cultivating a sufficient commitment to the job. The first battalion to form during training suffered nearly 50 percent attrition even before it left its training base, partially due to the training deficiencies and partially due to the CPA's provision of woefully insufficient wages, even in Iraqi terms. Speaking in December 2003, Eaton remarked that "soldiers need to train soldiers. You can't ask a civilian to do a soldier's job."<sup>(8)</sup> By mid-2004, he reiterated his criticisms, asserting that contractor-led training "hasn't gone well. We've had almost one year of no progress."<sup>(9)</sup> By the end of 2003, U.S. Army units assumed closer control of basic

training, with additional assistance from Jordanian and Australian forces.<sup>(10)</sup>

For the near future and barring any extreme contingencies, the ICDC/ING will remain the main effort of coalition trainers, followed by the Iraqi Police. A coalition training initiative emerged in summer 2003. Yet, the political timetable driven by Western capitals and Iraqis themselves soon outpaced the security training timeline, just as various training infrastructures have differed from area to area and are only in summer 2004 taking the initial steps towards unification on a national level. By some estimates, only 30 percent of Police, ICDC, and Border Police officers had undergone coalition training by the handover of sovereignty to Iraqis on June 28, 2004.<sup>(11)</sup> Complicating the matter, coalition forces must handle a pool of Iraqis with widely differing skills, experience, maturity, motivation, and basic education.

As regards the Police and National Guard, one may assume that the overwhelming majority have been attracted by the possibility of steady pay and not sympathy to the coalition or even Iraqi national pride.<sup>(12)</sup> This fact influences levels of motivation to undergo difficult training, show up regularly for fixed hours of work, and undertake missions of any danger. Likewise, many recruits served either in the old army or police forces, with the majority of ICDC officers having previous service. This is not as much a problem of latent pro-Ba'athi sympathies as of skill.

The sense of urgency in fielding the force combined with a hope that Iraqis having previous service would need very little re-training in basic police and infantry skills produced extremely short basic training programs, which lasted between ten days and three weeks. Not only did this prove insufficient to train out old ways and assumptions, but also it could not fully prepare those raw recruits with no

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significant prior service or training.(13) In fact, at the platoon level of the ICDC, several soldiers have had no prior experience and are extremely young, between the ages of thirteen and fifteen, having been encouraged to join by families desiring the funds. These inexperienced recruits sometimes make the most enthusiastic, open-minded soldiers ready to learn. This enthusiasm, however, only partially makes up for illiteracy.(14)

Further, with the exception of unconventional units whose direct-action mission load remains quite heavy, coalition forces do not possess large units and programs specifically designed to train culturally foreign forces. In the fall and winter of 2003-2004, the responsibility for providing basic training to the Iraqi National Guard resided with the units deployed to the area where that Iraqi element was to operate. In March-June 2004, larger brigade/regiment formations began standardizing basic training within their individual areas. Since then, it appears that division-level training standardization has proceeded.(15) In every case, coalition troops of disparate military specialties have worked to train the ING. These have included infantrymen, armored and artillery corps personnel, and military police. By contrast, personnel whose regular functions are training-related, such as drill sergeants and combined arms exercise trainers, are accustomed to very different operating environments and standards.

Conditions differ somewhat in the training of Iraqi law enforcement units, where coalition forces have relied on reservists with strong backgrounds in their countries' police, fire, and investigative departments. In fact, it is often these reservists--and especially the senior non-commissioned officers--who are best equipped as trainers, instinctively and through long service to understand how to adapt instruction methods and programs to

the local environment.(16) Likewise, certain army and marine civil affairs units possess similar skills, given their reserve background, while Marine Combined Action Platoons deploy after training in foreign culture, language, and weapons systems.(17) Still, in the majority of cases, trainers arrive on scene without the requisite instructional, regional, cultural, or linguistic preparation, and often with insufficient logistical or material support.

Since the spring of 2004, and especially after the fighting of April and May around Najaf and Falluja, coalition forces have begun providing follow-on training to the Iraqi Police and ING. Though formats vary, this often includes an enhanced platoon-training course. Additionally, a non-commissioned officer (NCO) course focuses on strengthening both the NCO corps as well as the concept of an NCO in a military which has traditionally not conceived of it in the NATO sense. An officers' course is attended by company- and battalion-level officers sent by their ICDC commanders. From both these courses, graduates return to their parent commands and are distributed among units in the hope that they will communicate their new skills to others.

By May 2004, U.S., British, and Australian trainers instituted squad leader and NCO courses for the Iraqi Army as well, focusing on counterinsurgency and urban warfare. Coalition trainers plan on indigenizing training over time, with graduates of the first NCO courses teaching subsequent raw recruits.(18) By late June 2004, about 1500 Iraqi officers had also graduated from the King Abdallah Military Academy in Zarqa, Jordan, with U.S. officials deeming them fit to take over training new recruits and officers in the future.(19)

In the law enforcement realm, police returning to the job with prior service often undergo a three-week Transitional Integration Program. Instructors are often

reservists with law enforcement backgrounds, in addition to "international police advisers" who also evaluate police operations. Working through translators, the vision is to indigenize the training staff over time here as well. Numbers of fresh recruits as well as returning veterans also attend an eight-week Police Academy, either in Baghdad or Jordan.

### **STRUCTURAL IMPEDIMENTS?**

These courses and coalition mentoring are part of an overall security assistance framework which continues to evolve. Before May 2004, foreign forces operating in Iraq functioned under the umbrella of Combined Joint Task Force-7 (CJTF-7), which was the overall coalition air-ground-sea command, that has since then been renamed Multinational Force Iraq (MNF-I). In this framework, the individual land components themselves mostly directed training of indigenous Iraqi security, particularly for the ICDC.

MNF-I is currently commanded by a four-star general (Gen George W. Casey), a change from CJTF-7, which was led by Lieutenant General Ricardo Sanchez. As such, the Multinational Corps-Iraq (MNC-I, commanded by Lieutenant General Thomas F. Metz), subordinate to MNF-I, is the operational follow-on to CJTF. Training structures come under MNC-I, are managed through an ISF coordinating office at the corps level, and have been grafted into the evolving relationship between MNC-I and the Iraqi ministries of defense and interior.

The Office of Security Cooperation (OSC), the main high-level coordination point for training between coalition and Iraqi forces, has since expanded. Now commanded by Lieutenant General Petraeus, it is an upgraded version of American Offices of Military Cooperation in Egypt, the Gulf, and elsewhere. OSC's military and police assistance offices are to develop training policy jointly with MNF-I,

and serve as the point of direct senior-level liaison with the Iraqi Ministries of defense and interior, both of which are to be run by senior Iraqi officers. OSC will then apportion tasks to the ISF assistance office at MNC-I, which is empowered to provide feedback and suggestions to OSC. As OSC and MNC-I are both run by three-star generals, this has the potential to generate a certain amount of friction, and OSC will have to work to avoid becoming an added level of operationally obstructive bureaucracy.

By all accounts, Lieutenant General Petraeus was wisely chosen to lead coalition training of Iraqi forces. The former commander of the American 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division, he was successful in working with indigenous forces in north-central Iraq in the second half of 2003. It should be noted, however, that the mostly Kurdish composition of those indigenous forces facilitated cooperation with the coalition. And, while Petraeus and his staff have been conscientious in determining shortcomings of previous training efforts and in learning region-specific training needs, by mid-July 2004, he and his office had still to make a noticeable impact on local level coalition operations.(20)

The ISF office at the corps level provides orders and direction to the actual field components, now organized as six Multinational Divisions (MND) on a geographic basis throughout Iraq. Each MND has its own ISF training cell, further subdivided according to coalition personnel working with individual Iraqi services. As such, this requires coordination and agreement among coalition and Iraqi four-star generals, two coalition three-star generals, and communication through to the coalition two-star general level (division), and execution through senior field grade officers commanding company-grade officers and enlisted men.

This arrangement is potentially quite cumbersome and time-consuming, with an

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abundance of over-interested participants. This invites tangles of input, direction, and feedback, or slow-downs. It also entails practical and operational difficulties, for example involving timelines for providing equipment. Further, greater complications might ensue in areas where forces are truly multinational (i.e. not just U.S. or British) and have multiple commanders, such as in the central-south of Iraq. The situation is also likely to become complicated where U.S. forces have intermediary commands between MNC-I and the divisional level, such as in western Iraq where the 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Expeditionary Force (a three-star command) is in overall control of the 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Division.

### CONCEPTUAL PROBLEMS

A persistent conceptual difficulty is that U.S. forces have yet to implement the train-advise-assist model of creating indigenous military and constabulary forces. Coalition units tasked to train Iraqis are often structurally or by regulation unable to patrol with them. As such, the personal relationships and training-operating continuum-historically so essential to effective indigenous force creation-are insufficient. Whereas in most regular militaries, particularly the American, depersonalization and discontinuity are built into the training and operating dynamic so as to encourage a unit-as-machine conception and interoperability, in training foreign, ethnically different forces this elicits problems of establishing trust, track-record, rapport, and problem-solving abilities. ING officers themselves have repeatedly complained about coalition trainers' and units' aloofness from Iraqi soldiers and disinterest in interacting meaningfully with them.(21) Again, the exception to these discontinuities are among those Special Forces units recruiting, mentoring, and operating with Iraqis, as well as those Marine Combined Action Platoons whose areas of operation

permit them to live, train, and patrol with ING and Iraqi Police.

A parallel problem creating the same effect is the short time span of training programs, most of which last no more than three weeks. Part of the brevity of the training programs has been politically dictated, to provide the appearance of Iraqification which, it is hoped, will snowball into greater acceptance of the coalition as well as a greater indigenous desire to support or join the ICDC or police. Likewise, the basic need for more Iraqis out on the street carrying out some fundamental tasks of public security has driven shorter training-spans able to generate graduates sooner. Conversely, certain trainers themselves lamenting the ineffectiveness of short training periods still favor them as a rear-guard measure to restrain the development of Iraqis' military competence, which could be turned against the coalition if they were to join the insurgents.(22)

Equally of concern, therefore, the coalition currently displays a bias towards training initial cadres of Iraqi soldiers and National Guardsmen who will then go on to instruct and train Iraqis themselves with gradually scaled-back coalition oversight. This has become known as the "train the trainer" approach. While several Iraqis are pleased to be seen as autonomous from foreign forces and appreciate the ability to command fellow Iraqis, "training the trainer" raises the likelihood that the mentoring and monitoring bond between coalition forces and Iraqi counterparts will be broken too soon, allowing for a precipitous decline in standards, accountability, and operational dependability. In contrast to coalition authorities' overly enthusiastic public statements about the Iraqification of security and accelerated indigenization of training, senior U.S. officers intimately familiar with the ISF have cautioned that several years and a sustained coalition

human and material commitment will be necessary to train credible Iraqi forces.(23)

### **ONGOING DIFFICULTIES**

These difficulties of training indigenous forces in Iraq are unavoidable in an environment where coalition forces must at the same time engage in humanitarian aid, reconstruction efforts, and all aspects of military operations from police action to high-intensity combat. In this context there are simply too many pressing concerns to devote sufficient amounts of time to any one task. Furthermore, notable progress has been made in assembling ING and Police units that remain credible and cohesive. Success occurs when resourceful young coalition officers possess enough training and operational autonomy from senior command. If the environment permits, such young leaders can then locate, promote, and create personal bonds with Iraqi counterparts with the *darisma* and concern for their enlisted troops to motivate them and instill unit pride. Likewise, it requires coalition troops' willingness to educate, arm, and patrol with Iraqis, often in spite of recent experiences fighting against Iraqis themselves--many of whom, in April-May, were deserters from the Iraqi Police and Civil Defense Corps.

Investing these efforts requires a shift from a bureaucratic American military-as-machine mindset which emphasizes speed, unit interoperability, personnel interchangeability, and depersonalization of processes. Coalition troops who succeed in motivating ISF have come to grasp and indeed value the time needed in Arab cultures to create personal, quasi-brother-like relationships with Iraqi counterparts. Taking this time has come to be understood as part of the painstaking, exhausting process of identifying trustworthy Iraqi officers and credible NCOs, who often become profoundly loyal to their American friends, perhaps more than to the Iraqi national cause. Further, successful

American commanders increasingly understand that their desires will be interpreted less as orders and more as the beginning of a negotiating process in which Americans need to remain sensitive to Iraqis' sense of manhood, self, and appearance before peers. Coalition troops must also grasp and work through the seeming paradox of Arab senior officers' disdain for junior officers and enlisted men combined with a tendency of Iraqi soldiers to temporarily disregard hierarchy. American commanders have had Iraqi privates walk directly up to them or Iraqi counterparts and complain about training or operating conditions. When coalition troops become comfortable with these dynamics, or accustom themselves to tolerating their own discomfort, truly exemplary coalition-ISF relationships have developed.

Quite frequently, however, as coalition units rotate out of an area, these personal relationship-driven dynamics have to be recreated, compromising progress made during the previous unit-Iraqi force relationship. This then requires a great amount of patience on the part of commanders new to the scene, as well as a readiness to learn from their predecessors. The latter as well confront much frustration, since difficulties with Iraqis in personal relationships, training, and operating habits are rarely solved but tend to crop back up repeatedly.(24)

Particularly as regards the ING, recruitment policies themselves also entail ongoing problems and debates. By and large, personnel for this service have been deployed in the localities where they live. Coalition planners reasoned that Iraqis living in, recruited from, and working in the same area would understand local political, economic, and criminal dynamics best, and would also be perceived by civilians as much less intrusive than Americans. Likewise, in a society with several cross-cutting ethnic, sectarian,

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geographic, and family cleavages, local Iraqis would conduct themselves better and be perceived as less obstreperous. In this view, nightmare scenarios would entail Shi'i or Kurdish personnel brutalizing Sunni and Arab areas; ethnically and religiously mixed units crumbling due to internal friction or, at the least, Iraqi units operating ineffectively due to their lack of local knowledge.

This policy itself, however, has created problems. Skeptical Iraqis presumed the ICDC to be a weak, cowardly service established by the occupation merely to do the latter's bidding. Initially, troops therefore often disguised themselves by covering their faces or discarding their uniforms so as not to be associated with the service. Sometimes, such practices were in response to intimidation from local insurgency leaders or criminal elements.(25) Still, these measures only reinforced many Iraqi civilians' suspicions, at the same time inhibiting the emergence of an *esprit de corps*. Alternatively, ICDC troops and police were sometimes so enmeshed in local dynamics that they manipulated their status and engaged in corrupt practices--which many Iraqis suspected in any case.

Likewise, membership of ING, Police, and Border Police personnel in local extended families sometimes discourages troops from aggressively pursuing criminals who might be related to them. In the same fashion, tribes in both the west and south have historically straddled the Syrian-Iraqi and Saudi-Iraqi borders. Often, Border Police officers from the Shammar and Jubbur tribes, for example, ignore their kinsmen's smuggling out of concern for tribal loyalty and their own livelihood.(26) Alternatively, work in these services as well as the Facilities Protection Service could be manipulated as family- or geographically-based means for nepotism or protection rackets. In this case, relatives of FPS guards would attack

the very sites their brethren were protecting in order to encourage coalition commanders to provide better pay to the guards or more slots in the service to that local family. In similar fashion, police have failed to assist the ING in apprehending suspects in favor of family-based informal justice.(27) In such circumstances, the failure of so many units to report or remain reliable during the disturbances in Ramadi, Falluja, and Najaf is understandable.

Yet, the desire to change business as usual and get Iraqis to think in "rational" as opposed to the "corrupt" ways privileging family, locality, or sect runs up against the realities of an Iraq atomized by previous regimes. Coalition commanders have had to either prohibit, or more often countenance after the fact, moves of ICDC and police commanders to fire personnel in order to bring in relatives. Similarly, disciplining an Iraqi officer for not cooperating with someone due to geographic or family differences will likely provoke all of that Iraqi's regional or familial kinsmen to walk off the job.(28)

Likewise, some of the best successes in recruiting and deploying Iraqi security formations--even during periods of intense nationwide insurgency activity--have been achieved on straight extended family or geographical lines, and with a tacit American understanding that these family-based units operate for reasons only partially congruent with coalition goals, and with specific geographic constraints or interests of their own. Conversely, there have been cases where conscientious Iraqi commanders have appointed subordinates based on merit instead of local origin or kin relations, only to find that neither troops nor local residents accept the qualified leader, thus forcing the coalition commander to suggest an alternate, more acceptable person. This is a persistent, vexing problem, as junior and senior coalition officers repeatedly confront the

dilemma that the strategic goals, if pursued consistently and conscientiously, will imperil near-to-mid term initiatives, while stop-gap solutions and interim approaches undermine strategic goals.(29)

For their own part, Iraqi officers in all services frequently voice the complaint corroborated by coalition commanders that uniforms, equipment, and living conditions remain substandard, both in absolute terms as well as in comparison to that of their coalition counterparts--or even the insurgents themselves.(30) Part of this is a reflection of the changing roles of any given service. For example, the equipment needs of the ICDC when perceived simply as an adjunct sentry support element (providing added security to coalition installations and units operating in an urban environment) were very different from that same service's needs as it is now perceived as a cross-over constabulary to light infantry force (i.e. a reinforced police service that can also undertake basic infantry offensive and defensive operations alongside of coalition units).

More fundamentally, equipment problems have resulted from the logistical and bureaucratic shortcomings affecting the coalition, and which have resulted in only \$220 million of the U.S. government-apportioned \$2.9 billion being spent on security assistance by mid-July.(31) Provision of uniforms, boots, weapons, radios, vehicles, body armor--even tents, meals, and sanitation facilities--is often delayed by disagreements among field units, higher headquarters, and national level coalition political-military authorities about who will provide what according to which timetable, at a cost to whom. (32) In such conditions, division- or regimental/brigade-level logisticians are often forced to locate, purchase, and provision materials at direct cost to the field units. As a consequence, according to one prepared report of July 2004, "Iraqi forces have about 40 percent of their

minimum weapons' needs, less than one-third of the minimum number of vehicles, about 25 percent of the necessary communications gear, and about 25 percent of the necessary body armor."(33)

There are several effects of the bottlenecks and slowdowns. First, they degrade the operational effectiveness of Iraqi units. Second, as Iraqi police or soldiers look to their American counterparts' equipment, they find their own materiel quite poor by comparison. Third, this same phenomenon of an equipment and appearance gap elicits Iraqis' suspicion that members of Western, largely Christian coalition forces consider Iraqis civilizationally unequal or unworthy of the same respect. Fourth, constant delays in equipment deliveries, and the low quality of some of the equipment, inadvertently convey negative messages to American trainers about the priority attached by higher-echelon commanders and administrators either to the lower-echelon efforts, or to training programs as a whole. This equipment differential will continue to be a challenge, particularly if the effort in Iraq is not truly internationalized while the coalition financial commitment necessarily lessens.(34)

#### **THE TRUST AND CREDIBILITY GAP**

Finally, many of these issues lead to basic uncertainties that coalition trainers and commanders have: can Iraqis wearing the uniform of the ISF be trusted? Will they cooperate with coalition units, or has insurgent activity intimidated them, inspiring fear more than mission commitment?(35) Are they sufficiently skilled to do their basic jobs? Across Iraq, soldiers and Marines repeatedly recount stories of Iraqi soldiers sleeping at checkpoints, inattentively manning gates, perfunctorily searching vehicles, and handling weapons with a dangerous degree of disregard for basic weapons safety.(36)

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These practices have not been seen to improve at the needed speed. As for trust, in addition to continued soldiers' and police officers' absenteeism, quitting, and solely financial motives for service, coalition forces continue to encounter difficulties getting ISF personnel to patrol with them, while actual cooperation is often quite reluctant.

Quite frequently as well, U.S. forces confront insurgents who have until recently been affiliated with the ING or Police. Particularly during the Falluja battles of April-May 2004, U.S. Marines and soldiers fought against insurgents still wearing their uniforms while firing on coalition positions.(37) Similarly, non-deserting units continue to refrain from supporting coalition forces under fire.(38) American commanders thus routinely counsel their soldiers to assume that the Iraqi units with which they operate are penetrated by insurgents, or that new recruits are sitting on the fence or "double dipping," waiting to see if coalition forces or insurgents are more effective or lucrative in a given area.

Since the handover of sovereignty to the new Iraqi government, events have taken a turn as yet difficult to analyze. In some instances, Iraqi units seemed to gain a much greater degree of confidence and mission-commitment almost overnight, leaving coalition counterparts both gratified that Iraqis would now operate and disappointed that they had not "stepped up to the plate" earlier.(39) Iraqi soldiers and commanders who before June 28, 2004, had displayed a clear dissatisfaction at having to work with and answer to American officers, for example, now unilaterally undertake operations, sometimes with much greater effectiveness, but sometimes without prior consultation.

Alternatively, they have restricted joint operations to a minimal amount of prior consultation, after which coalition units patrol one street while its partner Iraqi unit remains in another sector of town. These

actions can be understood as a normal assertion of sovereignty at the local level--even though theoretically the ISF remains under coalition operational control. Still, Iraq's political stability and security situation remain quite uncertain even while ISF training is still incomplete both qualitatively and quantitatively. Therefore, as the competence and dependability of indigenous Iraqi ISF commanders are questionable, the ever-accelerating Iraqification of the ISF's training, local operational autonomy, and national level command may very well undermine operational effectiveness as the price of political expediency.

### **TOWARDS THE FUTURE**

Ultimately, the emergence of a new Iraqi security network will require coalition officials and Iraqis themselves to define more clearly how different services will relate to each other, the sovereign Iraqi government, the coalition, and Iraqi society at large. Given the exceedingly fluid nature of the ISF and Iraqi government's evolution, resolving these matters will take some time. Yet, the stakes for everyone involved are quite high, demanding an early, workable resolution.

As for the past as an operational guide, coalition trainers and commanders will need to consider broad Arab and Iraqi trends.(40) On a basic level, Iraqi forces in every one of their major engagements since the 1960s have proven tactically impoverished down to the most junior levels and the most basic skills.

Just as important is the well-known reciprocal disdain of senior officers for junior officers and all officers for enlisted men. Likewise, Arab and Iraqi officers have never fully appreciated the importance of non-commissioned officers. These practices-- encouraged by an autocratic regime, Soviet military model, and highly stratified society--do violence to morale, mission-commitment, and unit

cohesion, just as they punish initiative. All these drawbacks are also identical to what coalition trainers and commanders encounter on a daily basis in working with Iraqi Security Forces.

Further, at every level, Iraqi forces in the past have operated in a command, control, communications (C3) black hole, as commanders do not communicate horizontally out of excessive competitiveness, and hinder upward information flows out of a desire not to pass on unpleasant information reflecting poorly on lower-level commanders. Interservice communication has been hopeless, while an excessive centralization of decision-making and what information there is at the top has compromised field units.

In contemporary Iraq as in other Arab countries, it is not simply an issue of fiefdom formation within services. Such patterns are particularly worrisome given the relationship of different services to each other and evolving views of the future missions of the ISF. By July 2004, at least eleven acknowledged security forces or sub-forces had emerged, in addition to a newly created General Security Directorate, an intelligence service.(41) These eleven organizations each have their own competitive material, political, and corporate interests.

The track records of civil-military relations in Iraq and other Arab countries illustrate a multiplication of force, and tendency for rulers to use different security and military forces to counterbalance each other. Indeed, the proliferation of forces in Iraq is now recalling pre-2003 trends.(42) For now, we may note that in the winter and spring of 2003-2004, problems between the Police and ICDC were constant,(43) involving lack of informational and operational coordination and ongoing animosities around equipment, wages, and status. In some situations

Police and ICDC would talk neither to each other nor to Iraqi municipal officials.

In late spring and early summer 2004, coalition commanders began establishing Joint Coordination Centers concentrating on the Police and ING in particular.(44) In some places, different service representatives have exhibited an earnest desire to work together. Yet, with technical hurdles related to communications equipment and operating procedures, often the coalition representatives themselves had to do the coordinating. Sometimes, in the midst of pre-planned joint operations involving coalition forces and more than one Iraqi service, quarrels among Iraqis about timing, procedures, or command would interrupt matters, stunting the actual progress of units.(45)

Likewise, when Arab regimes are not controlled by an overwhelmingly powerful dictatorship, authorities in different ministries and offices have tended to use the deployment, funding, and equipping of coercive forces in power-plays within government. In this respect, who controls what parts of the ISF is important to consider. In the current interim government, Prime Minister Iyad Allawi is likely to view the ISF as his central tool in undermining the insurgency and supporting his own regime, to the point of assembling monopolistic and authoritarian powers by Western standards. He has recently signaled his preference to focus resources on the Iraqi Intervention Force and Special Operations Force. He also prefers to control them through a command center in his own office, as opposed to channels within the ministries of defense and interior. His office is also to lead a Ministerial Committee for National Security, and ostensibly oversee a Joint Operating Center, meant to link field-level Joint Command Centers with the national leadership. Iraqi ministers of defense and interior will have representatives at the

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Joint Operations Center, as will, at least theoretically, commanders of the Multinational Force-Iraq.(46)

This evolving picture suggests a very strong prime minister marshalling the most effective striking forces, with a still cloudy political-military C3 relationship between the coalition and Iraqis. A strong prime minister might be in coalition interests, and may be able to provide stability and unity of command on the Iraqi side. Yet, given a recent past of an overly powerful Iraqi chief executive, coalition leaders will have to ensure that Allawi remains of the same mind as are they. They will also have to ensure that interim measures of control-political promotions within the ISF, frequent rotations of commanders, ministerial interference in operational matters, arbitrary sackings, and so on--do not become routine, especially as they have been second nature among Iraqi leaders for the past several decades.

For now, Allawi appears to have encouraged his deputy prime minister, Barham Salih, to take a key role in defense decision-making, in addition to opening lines of communication with insurgents. Likewise, Salih, an official of the more unified Iraq-oriented Patriotic Union of Kurdistan, might be able to assure the loyalty of certain Kurdish factions to Baghdad security authorities. Or, he might act as a focus of alternate loyalties on the part of security forces, though for now Allawi appears in control, as the interim defense minister.

Likewise, no uniformed commander has been able to emerge yet to challenge the interim government's authority. The coalition-supported Allawi has distributed top army roles across the major ethnic and confessional groups. The senior military adviser, General Babekr al-Zibari is Kurdish with experience as a Peshmerga fighter. Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces General Amir Ahmad Bakr al-Hashimi, is a Sunni Arab, while his deputy, Lieutenant

General al-Assal, is Shiite. Clearly, Allawi has reached out to the Kurds through Salih and Zibari, though the latter two individuals' ethnic bonds bear monitoring.(47) Both al-Hashimi and al-Assal served as officers in the Saddam-era military. Al-Hashimi ended his career as deputy commandant at the Military Academy and then went on to sit on the Baghdad City Council; an infantryman, Assal was a divisional commander and then taught at a military college.

Ultimately, the commanders of the ING and Police will be important figures though as yet there are not nation-wide heads of these services. Indeed, governmental structures, political alliances, and surrounding security conditions remain too fluid to mark out a clear picture of evolving civil-military entanglements. Still, given Iraq's recent past and current evolving security challenges and political conditions, coalition commanders will need to exert tremendous energy to avoid an outcome that would undermine both ISF effectiveness and the political reconstruction of Iraq.

The still unclear vision of the future roles and status of different branches of the ISF makes this effort all the more difficult. The Army is not intended to have a domestic role. It was used in this capacity, however in late spring 2004, raising issues of where the Police leave off, the National Guard begins, and then the Army takes over. If the National Guard is considered a constabulary force, training programs emphasizing light infantry skills might not be appropriate, though it is good preparation for integration with the army. If the latter occurs though, it will disrupt chains of command, the rank structure, and Iraqi officers' perception of their own prestige. Merging the National Guard with the Army will also re-insert family and geographical factors into military-military as well as military-civil relations. Likewise, if the Army is to have no

domestic role and be curtailed from a power projection role, it will overlap in its roles and range with the Border Patrol.

Coalition trainers continue to remark at the lack of vision for the ING in particular, including cloudy descriptions of its functions and delays in developing firm tables of organization and equipment. The latter criticism is also heard in reference to the Border Police.(48) Any Iraqi or coalition security planner must thus be concerned about the creeping proliferation of services and overlapping of roles, in the absence of clear guidelines and mission descriptions.

The timetable to becoming a more sovereign coercive force will determine the ability of the ISF to overcome these challenges. If the Iraqi government responds to popular clamoring for greater sovereignty by pressing the coalition for more control of the security realm, coalition leaders are likely to respond favorably as they search for an exit strategy amid declining domestic support for maintaining American troops in Iraq. Conversely, an intensified insurgency or the adventurism of Syria and Iran may force the coalition to build up the ISF in terms of personnel, weapons, and autonomy from the coalition itself.

Yet, an accelerated approach, which has characterized coalition political action of late, risks turning a potential pillar of Iraqi law, order, stability, and sovereignty into an instrument of a free Iraq's still-birth. More broadly, continued observation of the ISF's evolution will provide much insight into how to establish multiple security forces in midst of an insurgency, in a culturally foreign environment recovering from an autocracy which both corrupted coercive forces and used them as a political tool in domestic repression and foreign adventurism.

*\*Assistant Professor, Department of National Security Affairs, Naval*

*Postgraduate School. Barak Salmoni has worked with the U.S. Army's 1<sup>st</sup> Infantry Division and the U.S. Marine Corps' 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Division, in the United States, Germany, and Iraq. He would like to thank Maj. Seth Folsom (U.S.M.C.) and Maj. David Vacchi (U.S.A.) for their assistance in preparing this essay, which is dedicated to the memory of SSgt. Jorge Molina-Bautista, 1<sup>st</sup> Light Armored Reconnaissance Battalion, 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Division. The views here are those of the author alone; they do not represent the attitudes of the Naval Postgraduate School, U.S. Department of Navy, or Department of Defense.*

#### NOTES

1. See "Written Statement of Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz Prepared for the House Armed Services Committee," June 22, 2004, p. 9.

<[http://www.house.gov/hasc/openingstate\\_mentsandpressreleases/108thcongress/Wolfowitz6-22-04.pdf](http://www.house.gov/hasc/openingstate_mentsandpressreleases/108thcongress/Wolfowitz6-22-04.pdf)> :

"Of course, the long-term key to success in Iraq requires building indigenous Iraqi capacity and transitioning responsibilities from the coalition to Iraq. Nowhere is this more vital than in our efforts to build capable Iraqi security forces..." For commanders echoing this sentiment, see Aamer Madhani, "In Race to Train Iraqi Security Force, GIs Find Trust is Biggest Obstacle," The Chicago Tribune, July 14, 2004.

2. See Borzou Daragahi, "In Iraq, private contractors lighten load on U.S. troops," Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, September 28, 2003.

<<http://www.post-gazette.com/pg/03271/226368.stm>>.

3. As an example of how different nomenclature and methods of accounting can lead to quite different results, compare two sources: Lt. Gen. Walter L. Sharp, Director of Strategic Plans and Policy, the Joint Staff, "Statement to House Armed Service Committee," June 16, 2004.

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<<http://armedservices.house.gov/openingstatementsandpressreleases/108thcongress/04-06-16sharp.pdf>>; and "U.S. turns over Untrained Forces to Interim Government," World Tribune.com, June 25, 2004. <[http://216.26.163.62/2004/me\\_iraq\\_06\\_2\\_5.html](http://216.26.163.62/2004/me_iraq_06_2_5.html)>. The latter itself is based upon a late June Pentagon report, yet reaches different quantitative and qualitative conclusions.

4. Anthony H. Cordesman, "Inexcusable Failure: Progress in Training the Iraqi Army and Security Forces as of Mid-July 2004," Center for Strategic and International Studies Report, July 20, 2004, pp. 8-9.

<[http://www.csis.org/features/iraq\\_inexcusablefailure.pdf](http://www.csis.org/features/iraq_inexcusablefailure.pdf)>.

Cordesman's is thus far the best critical work on these matters. I have chosen the most general numbers in this essay. For a highly critical listing of various conflicting statements of personnel numbers in the ISF, see the Center for American Progress, "Iraqi Security Forces: Adding It Up."

<<http://www.americanprogress.org/site/pp.asp?c=biJRJ8OVF&b=11300>>.

5. For unification of command in Israel, see Yehuda Ben Meir, Civil-Military Relations in Israel (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), pp. 76-99.

6. For early articulation of these views at senior U.S. policy making levels, see Donna Miles, "Iraqi Civil Defense Corps Grows in Number and Role," American Forces Information Service, October 29, 2003.

<<http://www.dod.mil/news/Oct2003/n10292003200310293.html>>. Also see Tim Ripley, "Unstable Iraq Looks to New Security Forces," Jane's Intelligence Review, December 1, 2003, pp. 29-31.

7. "Coalition Provisional Authority Order Number 73, Transfer of the Iraqi Civil Defense Corps to the Ministry of Defence," CPA-Iraq Coalition Website.

<[http://www.cpa-iraq.org/regulations/20040425\\_CPAORD](http://www.cpa-iraq.org/regulations/20040425_CPAORD)>

<[http://www.cpa-iraq.org/regulations/20040425\\_CPAORD](http://www.cpa-iraq.org/regulations/20040425_CPAORD)>. <[http://www.cpa-iraq.org/regulations/20040425\\_CPAORD](http://www.cpa-iraq.org/regulations/20040425_CPAORD)>.

8. Ariana Eunjung Cha, "Recruits Abandon Iraqi Army," The Washington Post, December 13, 2003, p. A1.

<<http://www.washingtonpost.com/ac2/wp-dyn/A60899-2003Dec12?language=printer>>.

9. Dean Calbreath, "Iraqi Army, Police Force Fall Short on Training," The San Diego Union-Tribune, July 4, 2004.

<[http://www.signonsandiego.com/uniontrib/20040704/news\\_mz1b4iraqi.html](http://www.signonsandiego.com/uniontrib/20040704/news_mz1b4iraqi.html)>.

10. "Australian Force to Boost Iraqi Army Training," Australian Ministry of Defence Media Release, February 23, 2004.

<<http://www.minister.defence.gov.au/Hillpl.cfm?CurrentId=3553>>;

Raju Gopalakrishnan, "New Iraq Army Officers Head for Training in Jordan," The Jordan Times, December 30, 2003; "Iraqi Women Soldiers Graduate from Training Course," The Jordan Times, July 10, 2004.

11. Lisa Hoffman, "Efforts to Rebuild Made Progress in Many Areas," The Tennessean.com, June 29, 2004.

<<http://www.tennessean.com/nation-world/archives/04/06/53434674.shtml>>.

12. See Ariana Eunjung Cha, "Flaws Showing in New Iraqi Forces," The Washington Post, December 30, 2003, p. A1.

<<http://www.washingtonpost.com/ac2/wp-dyn/A39885-2003Dec29?language=printer>>.

13. United States General Accounting Office, "Rebuilding Iraq: Resource, Security, Governance, Essential Services, and Oversight Issues," (GAO-04-902R), June 2004, pp. 56-60. <<http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d04902r.pdf>>.

14. Interviews with Police and ICDC instructors, al-Anbar province, Iraq, June-July 2004; observation of training sites.

15. Roland G. Walters, "Iraqi National Guard Graduates First Basic Training

Class," Army News Service, July 14, 2004.

[http://www4.army.mil/ocpa/read.php?story\\_id\\_key=6157](http://www4.army.mil/ocpa/read.php?story_id_key=6157)>.

This article refers to the 1st Infantry Division's ING training academy in Tikrit.

16. Interview with Marine training Iraqi Police, June 10, 2004.

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18. Jared Zabaldo, "Iraqi Army Soldiers Graduate from Coalition School," Defend America, May 24, 2004.

<http://www.defendamerica.mil/articles/may2004/a052404b.html>>.

19. "U.S. Deems Iraqi Officers Capable of Training Recruits," World Tribune.com, June 23, 2004

[http://216.26.163.62/2004/me\\_iraq\\_06\\_2\\_3.html](http://216.26.163.62/2004/me_iraq_06_2_3.html)>.

20. Correspondence with division-level ISF trainers, July 2004.

21. Eric Schmitt, "U.S. Needs More Time to Train and Equip Iraqis."

22. Anonymous interviews, several coalition officials, June 2004.

23. Charles Snow, "Training the New Iraqi Army," Middle East Economic Survey, Vol. 47, No. 4, (January 26, 2004)

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27. Discussions with coalition intelligence officers, June-July 2004.

28. Participant-observation of training in Iraq, June 2004.

29. Communication with coalition special operators, June 2004.

30. Eric Schmitt, "U.S. Needs More Time to Train and Equip Iraqis," The New York Times, May 24, 2004, p. A14; Lourdes Navarro, "Iraqi Forces Fighting Beside Marines Angry at Being Outgunned and Having to Kill Fellow Iraqis," The San Diego Union-Tribune, April 17, 2004. For official statements to this effect, see "Written Statement of Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz," p. 10. Such sentiment was repeated by all but the most pro-coalition ISF members interviewed for the present study.

31. Anthony H. Cordesman, "Inexcusable Failure," p. 6.

32. Conversations with coalition ICDC trainers, July 2004; see also William Cole, "Security Corps Gradually Building," Honolulu Advertiser.com, April 5, 2004. <http://the.honoluluadvertiser.com/dispatch>

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[es/stories/040504](#)>.

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<<http://www.csmonitor.com/2004/0621/p01s03-woiq.htm>>.

35. See "Written Statement of Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz," p. 10.

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[1n25marines.html](#)>. Most telling was that "Asked why ICDC forces did not help the Marines yesterday, Ibrahim, the Fallujah mayor, said through a translator: "The ICDC did not attack the foreign fighters because the foreign fighters are only here to kill Americans and not the ICDC.'"

39. Conversation with U.S. Civil Affairs commander, July 14, 2004.

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<<http://www.detroitnews.com/2004/nation/0406/24/a04-192666.htm>>; John Balzar,

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45. See Ann Scott Tyson, "Iraqi-Led Security Missions Begin," The Christian Science Monitor, July 2, 2004.

<<http://www.csmonitor.com/2004/0702/p06s02-woiq.html>>.

46. "Written Statement of Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz," pp. 8-10.

47. Conversation with U.S. official

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involved in training Iraq Ministry of Defense officials, May 23, 2004.

48. Correspondence with ISF coordinators detailed to border issues and training of the ING, July 13, 2004.